

OHSU Department of Family Medicine's anti-racism statement

At the OHSU Department of Family Medicine, we fully support the Black Lives Matter movement. Family Medicine began as a social justice movement in the 1960s; it is overdue for us to focus that movement toward racial justice, particularly to addressing centuries of violence and oppression toward Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

We condemn the murders of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and the [countless other lives of Black, Indigenous, and people of color](#) we did not list (and will never know) due to structural racism and police brutality. We stand with the [American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#) and the [Association of American Medical Colleges \(AAMC\)](#) in their declaration of racism and police violence as a public health crisis.

We also acknowledge that racism extends beyond policing, including into our world of health care. Most recently, that has resulted in BIPOC communities being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This viral pandemic sits atop the already existing pandemic of racism, which has historically led to higher rates of chronic health conditions, higher rates of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, and lower life expectancy rates for BIPOC. We acknowledge the injustices historically and currently committed by the health care and research systems: the nonconsensual and uncompensated use of Black bodies for science (Henrietta Lacks, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study), and the [under treatment of pain and assumed differences in pain tolerance by race](#). These are just some examples among many of the ways structures, policies, and practices lead to racial/ethnic disparities in health.

And amongst our own BIPOC colleagues, we acknowledge these murders and these pandemics further burden them with exhaustion, including fear for themselves and their loved ones.

To help confront this – as just the start of what will be generations of work – the Department of Family Medicine:

- Acknowledges this work starts foremost with ourselves. We are making a long-term commitment to acknowledging and addressing white supremacy culture and working toward becoming anti-racist, while being intentional about not unduly burdening our BIPOC colleagues.
- Publicly condemns racism and police violence, and declare them both public health emergencies, including the use of tear gas — a weapon [banned during war](#) and that [increases the risk of spreading COVID-19](#) — at protests, and demands that the Portland Police Bureau end the use of tear gas now. We urge all of OHSU and other health systems to do the same.
- Supports OHSU in divesting from prison labor for laundry services that disproportionately impact BIPOC communities.
- Will use our platform to provide [concrete steps \(as outlined by APHA\) on how legislators can address law enforcement violence as a public health emergency](#).

We are committed to working toward ensuring our BIPOC patients, trainees, staff, and faculty all feel welcomed and can thrive at OHSU Family Medicine. Family Medicine is committed to doing all the layers of work that must be done in order to guarantee *everyone* that we are a place of safety, care, and healing. Our Department is committed to re-imagining what is possible, centering what has been on the margins for too long, and working to heal the historical wounds that impact BIPOC members of our society, so that we can truly improve health for all.